

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

ORDER NO. 1000

IN THE MATTER OF:

Served December 22, 1969

Application of D. C. Transit)	Application No. 444
System, Inc., for Authority)	
to Change Base Schedule on its)	Docket No. 150
Cabin John Shuttle, Routes 20)	
and 21.)	

In Application No. 444 filed June 21, 1967, D. C. Transit System, Inc. (Transit) sought to change the base schedule on its Cabin John Line, Routes 20 and 21, by eliminating all Saturday and Sunday service and all mid-day and evening service, so that all that would remain would be a rush-hour only weekday schedule. On September 7, 1967, the Commission held a hearing on the application but felt that on the basis of the record developed at that hearing, it could not make a disposition of the application. Therefore, by Order No. 935, dated March 17, 1969, the record was re-opened for the purpose of taking further evidence and a hearing was held on April 22, 1969:

For many years prior to January 1960, the Cabin John streetcar operated from Cabin John to Union Station providing convenient, pleasant, frequent through service to downtown Washington from the communities of Brookmont and Glen Echo and Cabin John. These communities, in fact, grew up because the streetcar line was there, and many of the residents of these communities moved into them because of the availability of the very fine service provided by the streetcar. In January 1960, the streetcar was taken out as a result of instructions from Congress to D. C. Transit that all streetcar operations should be converted to buses. However, because MacArthur Boulevard runs on top of an aqueduct and thus is not structurally suitable to carry the large buses generally in use by Transit, a special kind of vehicle has been used to provide transit service between the District line and Cabin John. Initially, new small 17-passenger

buses were purchased by D. C. Transit for use on this line; however, these vehicles could not withstand the rigors of MacArthur Boulevard. The company then utilized school-type vehicles. Public witnesses at the hearings voiced strong objections to these buses. During November 1968, the company modified two of its small transit buses to meet the weight limitations applicable to MacArthur Boulevard and those vehicles are still in use in this service.

Since the termination of the streetcar operation and the institution of the small bus service, patronage of transit services from these communities has declined precipitously. In its last year of operation, the streetcar carried 1200 passengers a day on weekdays and 600 on Saturdays and 400 on Sundays. Transit introduced exhibits in this case showing that with the week ended January 31, 1969, the average weekday total was 158 passengers using the bus; the average number of Saturday passengers for January 25 and February 1 was 27; and for the two Sundays, January 26 and February 2, an average of 11 passengers used the bus. On some days, there are fewer passengers than there are bus trips provided. Transit also shows that the Cabin John Shuttle does not produce enough revenue to cover out-of-pocket costs, and even under the proposed rush-hour-only schedule, it will not be a paying proposition.

The Civic League of Brookmont and Vicinity has been an active voice for the improvement of transit service in this neighborhood and appeared at both hearings in opposition to Transit's application for reduced service. Its spokesman reviewed the history of Transit's service in the area involved and asserted that the kind of cut-back contemplated by Transit would deprive those who could not drive or do not own automobiles of transportation. The association argued that the decline in patronage is directly traceable to the decline in service, and that rather than abandon most of the service, efforts should be made to rejuvenate it and thereby to attract the public back to public transit. The association offered, as it has in the past, to provide whatever assistance it can in those efforts.

It is clear to us that the reasons for the deterioration of patronage is the kind of equipment used in this service and the elimination of through service to these communities. There are no indications that the decline in Transit's patronage is due to any movement away from bus transportation in favor of private transportation because of lack of interest in use of public transportation; on the contrary, people in these communities have indicated a strong desire for continued bus transportation and for its improvement so that it can provide a reasonable alternative to private transportation. In these circumstances, we are not inclined to respond by undertaking the negative action of reducing service so that patronage can further decline to the point where it would then seem appropriate to eliminate public transit service altogether. We agree with the civic association spokesman that approaches designed to re-establish good transit service and designed to bring patrons back to public transportation should be undertaken before further reduction in service is allowed. Therefore, we will deny Transit's application and will direct Transit and the Commission staff to explore possibilities of improved service to the area, and to implement new services that seem to hold out that possibility.

Several suggestions for improvement were made at the hearing, and we are confident that others can be developed. Among the suggestions already put forward is the proposal to extend the downtown buses, that now terminate at Sibley Hospital, into Brookmont. This would provide a through service to that community. The weight limitation on MacArthur Boulevard does not appear to be a problem in getting to Brookmont because additional road facilities have been created to accommodate large vehicles. Another possibility was discussed at the hearing which involves experimenting with a demand-activated service as an alternative to the conventional scheduled service. We are aware of some research work being done on this type of service under the auspices of the Department of Transportation. In addition, the report prepared for this Commission earlier this year by H. Zinder and Associates, Inc., carries as one of its recommendations the following paragraph:

"In view of the high percentage of peak period riders from the counties to the District that drive or are driven to a bus stop, the Commission should experiment with a demonstration project between residential concentrations in the study area and a bus terminal at the District line. The service should encompass a relatively small zone of influence extending into the study area from a selected bus terminal. It should be a demand-responsive, flexibly-routed, door-to-terminal pickup and delivery feeder taxi-bus operation. It will require specific promotion and enormous management attention to detail. If successful in attracting ridership, additional terminals should be provided with similar services."

It seems to us that the Brookmond-Glen Echo-Cabin John area might be quite suitable and appropriate for a demonstration experiment of demand-activated services. We will, therefore, direct the staff to seek the assistance of the Department of Transportation in an experimental demand-activated program; we will expect Transit to render full cooperation in this effort. We further expect that the staff and the company will involve the people in the communities by working through the civic associations in developing new approaches for stimulating patronage.

If, at any time in the future, Transit applies again for reduction in its Cabin John Shuttle service it will be expected to provide, as part of its application, a full report describing its efforts to rejuvenate public transit in the area, so that the Commission will be advised that Transit will have exhausted all reasonable alternatives.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED:

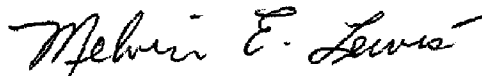
1. That the application of D. C. Transit System, Inc., for authority to change the base schedule on its Cabin John Line, Routes 20 and 21, be, and it is hereby, denied.

2. That the Commission staff and the company undertake a mutual effort to develop new routings, or other new approaches to the problem of deteriorating service on the Cabin John Line,

and they are further directed to consult with and employ the assistance of the civic associations representing the area involved.

3. That the Commission staff is directed to negotiate with the Department of Transportation with a view to instituting a demonstration project for a demand-activated transit system serving the MacArthur Boulevard Corridor.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMISSION:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melvin E. Lewis".

MELVIN E. LEWIS
Executive Director